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ABSTRACT

The project on which this report focuses is basically a research and development enterprise set up to investigate the possibilities of constructing and introducing core syllabuses and to study problems that emerge in such an undertaking. The project is largely an attempt to test the feasibility and practicability of an approach to curriculum and to see what core syllabuses might look like. The description covers the following topics: the structure of the comprehensive school curriculum; curriculum development trends; and research and development work on basic objectives. An analysis and summary of the present situation are also included. (DS)

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BASIC OBJECTIVES: THEIR
INVESTIGATION AND DISSEMINATION
THROUGH TEACHER EDUCATION

Editor:
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FOREWORD

On the basis of the discussions at Tune it was found advisable to give a short account of the background and orientation of the project on basic objectives and core contents. It is hoped that these brief remarks will put the undertaking in its proper context and make it possible for readers to get a better idea of the project.

The project is basically a R & D enterprise, rather than an administrative planning project, set up to investigate the possibilities of constructing and introducing core syllabuses and to study problems that emerge in such an undertaking. The project is largely an attempt to test the feasibility and practicability of an approach to curriculum and to see what core syllabuses - based on given criteria - might look like. Thus, the question of legitimating the syllabus models has not been a major concern.

The scope of the project was also limited so that the work was confined to so-called instrumental subjects: mother tongue, mathematics and foreign languages. Thus it was not feasible to attempt to define a "basic" level for overall educational objectives in the same way. Similarly, it was not felt advisable to start the work, at any rate at this stage, on "modern subjects" such as history, geography, civics, etc.

From the beginning it was envisaged that there should be a follow-up of how teachers and teacher educators react to the proposals and whether they find them helpful in the planning of their daily work. This feedback combined with other follow-up activities would give useful information for the revision of syllabuses when the whole curriculum next time undergoes a major overhaul, probably sometime in the early 1980's.

Part I of this report was written by Sauli Takala, Researcher in the Institute for Educational Research; Part II by Associate Professor Paavo Malinen, Teacher Training College, University of Jyväskylä. Chapter 8, Summary of Present Situation, was written by Sauli Takala together with FL Kaisa Hälinen, Institute of Education, University of Helsinki and Yrjö Yrjönsuuri, Debuty Director General, National Board of General Education.

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PART I : D E S C R I P T I O N

Sauli Takala

1. Sturucture of the Comprehensive School Curriculum

1.1. Introductory remarks

P r i m a r y e d u c a t i o n in Finland means the education of the age group from 7 to 16. At the end of the 1970's it will be given in the comprehensive-type basic school, which is part of the municipal school system. Identical education can be obtained in a few schools in some towns, which have not wanted to join the municipal school system. The basic school is a 9-year comprehensive-type school of compulsory education. Its first six grades form the lower stage and the three upper grades constitute the upper stage.

The Law on the Principles of the Educational System ("Frame Law") (467/68) establishes the structure of the comprehensive school and defines the subjects to be taught. According to the law the municipalities have a c u r r i c u l u m , which is approved by the municipal school board and ratified by the Provincial Department of Education (which is, in fact, part of the central administration of education with some of the functions which earlier were carried out mainly by the National Boards). According to the Statute on Comprehensive School (443/70) the municipal curriculum is to be constructed on the basis of the directions of the National Board of General Education and it contains an account of the general principles of education, subjects and the number of lessons allotted to them, total number of school hours, courses/sets, as well as an account of the principles of the differentiation/individualization of teaching during the upper stage, of the provision of remedial teaching and of guidance and councelling. Teaching during the first six years (lower stage) is uniform and no ability grouping takes place. In the upper stage there takes place some differentiation so that in mathematics there are two

sets in grade 7 and three in grades 8 and 9, three sets in the first foreing language throughout the upper stage, and two sets in the second foreign language. There is no differentiation with regard to the number of weekly lessons in these subjects, however. The completion of so-called general or short courses entails limited qualification for post-comprehensive education. A separate part of the municipal curriculum is an annual plan of work which is prepared for each school year and which gives an account of the number of school days, teaching groups (classes), textbooks, timetable, co-operation between home and school, school clubs etc. Some parts of the municipal curriculum are laid down in the municipal ordinance of education. Such matters are, for instance, the foreign languages to be taught as compulsory subjects in the municipality, the elective subjects, the education of exceptional children if there are no special schools or classes for them.

Remedial teaching (supportive teaching) can be given, subject to the approval of the children's parents, to pupils suffering from temporary learning difficulties or for other reasons in need of extra teaching. Special education is given in ESN schools or other special schools, which give special education to children who are retarded or subnormal. A large part of special education is given in clinics to children who are placed in normal classes.

1.2. Administrative organization

The administrative organization of school education is illustrated in Figure 1.

The frame law determines the subjects taught in the comprehensive school, the comprehensive school statute lays down the number of hours for different subjects and the grounds for the formation of groups, the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee defines the objectives of teaching and the extent of courses/sets, and the decision of the National Board of General Education outlines the format of the municipal curriculum and of the annual plan of work. When the National Board of General Education on March 17, 1972 established the format of the municipal curriculum, it simultaneously prescribed

the objectives defined in the Report of the Comprehensive School Curriculum to be observed in schools. Thus the decisions take by the Parliament, the Ministry of Education and the National Board of General Education form a whole, which the Curriculum Committee in its first report calls the national curriculum. This term does not, however, have any official status, although it does reflect the prominent position of the central administration.

At the municipal (local) level the curriculum is prepared by a board of school planning set up by the local School Board. The proposal is approved by the School Board after the Heads of schools have given their comments on it. The curriculum has to be subjected to the Provincial Department of Education for final approval. In practice the local curriculum is usually prepared in a short time on a form, which is in accordance with the format ratified by the National Board of General Education; only in exceptional cases have municipalities made any essential amendments to the text of the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee. On the other hand, the preparation of the annual plan of work, its approval by the School Board and its ratification by the Provincial Department of Education is an important administrative document because it has direct bearing on the amount of state aid and on teachers' work. The procedure in the construction of the comprehensive school curriculum is illustrated in Chart 1.

The proposal for a given school curriculum and the proposal for its annual plan of work is prepared by the Head together with other teachers. Thus there is a need to participate in curriculum construction within each school as well. During regular planning days it is possible for teachers to discuss the objectives and contents of teaching. Teaching materials and related teachers' guides also contain a lot of suggestions for the realization of the curriculum. Since the textbooks are approved by the National Board of General Education, they conform with the principles laid down in the report of the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee.

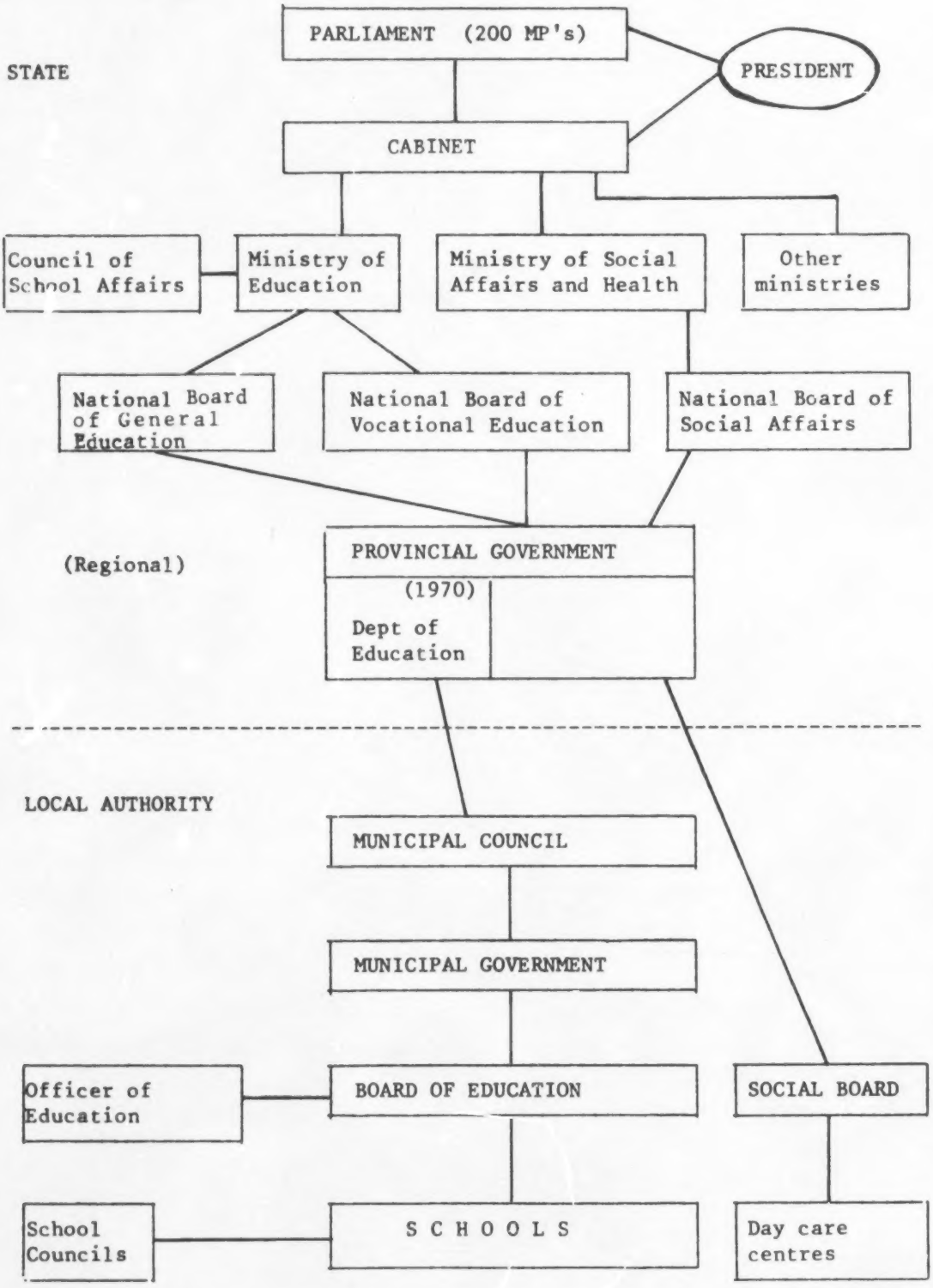

FIGURE 1. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN FINLAND

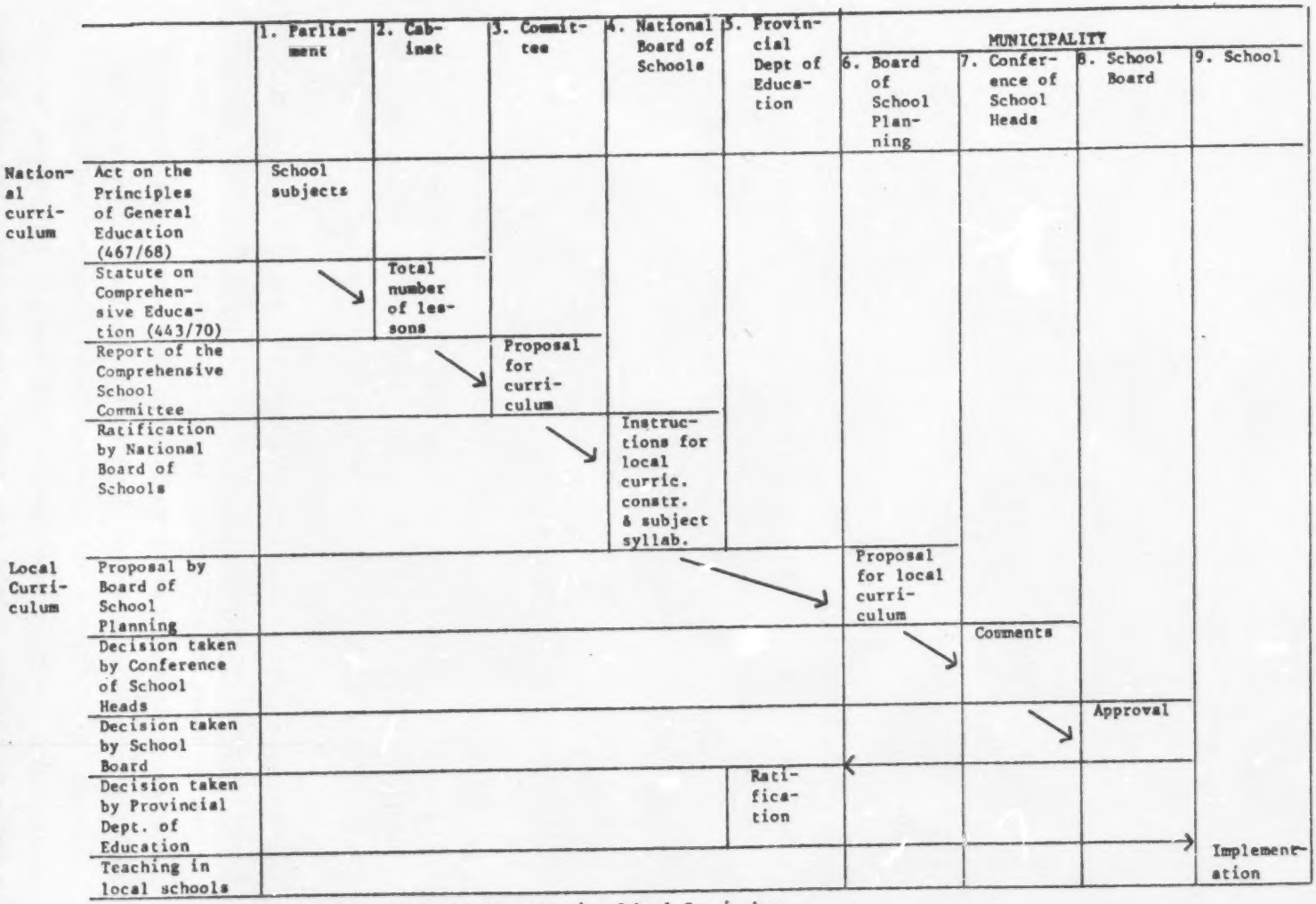

CHART 1. Procedure of constructing the Comprehensive School Curriculum

1.3. Implementation of the comprehensive school

The planning of the implementation of the comprehensive school started at two levels at the beginning of the 1970's. At the n a t i o n a l level the National Board of General Education prepared regional plans of implementation which laid down which regions and which municipalities transferred to the new system and the timetable of this changeover. It was envisaged that the whole country would have a full-fledged municipal school system by 1986. The implementation started in northern parts of the country in line with general policy of increasing equality of educational opportunity. The timetable has, however, been speeded up so that the comprehensive system is fully established in 1982. In Lapland the first agegroup left the comprehensive school in the spring of 1977.

At the m u n i c i p a l level a school planning committee was appointed in each municipality at the beginning of 1970 and during two years it prepared the local school plan and the local school ordinance. These two documents define how comprehensive school education is organized in the municipality subject to the approval of the National Board of General Education.

2. Curriculum Development Trends

2.1. Introductory remarks

During the transition from the parallel school system to the comprehensive school the curriculum combined elements from the primary school and lower secondary school teaching, so the early stages of implementation were not entirely in line with the comprehensive school curriculum. Besides, the curriculum outlined in the committee report is so general that it has to be concretized at least at the school level. Thus there is a need for a continuous development of curriculum even within the framework of the present curriculum. Suggestions for guidelines for the teaching of different subjects have been prepared and the curriculum has been supplemented with special syllabuses for media education, safety education, consumer education and human human relations and sex education.

The medium term plans of the National Board of general Education include the revision of the "official curriculum" in 1980 so that it would also take into account the pre- and post-comprehensive education. This project (OPS-80) has, however, changed its character because of the new plans of revising the whole secondary level education. The most essential object of development has, therefore, become the c o n c r e t i z a t i o n of the comprehensive school curriculum, not its revision. There have been prepared proposals for core contents and basic skills in the teaching of the mother tongue, foreign languages and mathematics, and these proposals have been discussed in the basic and in-service training of teachers. More emphasis has also been given to the overall educational objectives of the comprehensive school. Decisions taken by the Cabinet bringing about some changes in the timetable and some other developments have made it necessary to give new instructions about the implementation of the curriculum.

The administrative transition to the comprehensive school system will be completed by 1977 and all nine grades will follow the comprehensive school curriculum by 1982. During this transition period there will occur needs to develop the curriculum. The pedagogical readiness for the transition has improved all the time as more and more experiences from comprehensive schools in Lapland become available. This means that teachers in southern Finland, which is the last region to go comprehensive, can in advance develop their teaching in order to be able to cope with new demands. However, a systematic development of teaching is likely to take place only after the transition period.

2.2. Factors influencing the need to develop the comprehensive school curriculum

The working groups set up by the National Board of General Education analyzed the need for developing the comprehensive school curriculum and concluded that development work was necessary for the following reasons:

1. The general educational aims and their connection with subject-based objectives tend to remain unclear to the teacher.

2. The subject-based objectives and teaching contents are so demanding that the planning of teaching and the selection of teaching contents cause difficulties and easily lead to too close dependence on textbooks and to differing choices of teaching contents, which causes difficulties when pupils transfer from one education level to another or from one school to another.

3. The position and relationships of the national and local curricula are not clear.

4. The policy decision made by the Cabinet on 5th May 1974 regarding the reform of secondary education and therewith connected development of the comprehensive school as a better basis for further studies, has made it even more important to define the basic objectives and basic teaching contents common to the whole age group. The attainment of basic objectives is considered to provide a sufficient qualification for studies after the comprehensive school and form a basis for planning of secondary education.

5. The policy decision taken by the Cabinet regarding the reform of the functional structure of the comprehensive school on 13th March 1975 has made new curricula or curricular guidelines necessary in subjects whose position and number of hours changed considerably because of the policy decision.

6. General and subject-wise developments in curriculum construction also have made it necessary to revise some parts of the comprehensive school curriculum.

2.3. Committee views and proposals concerning the development of the comprehensive school curriculum

Several reports have suggested that the comprehensive school curriculum should be developed e.g. by defining the basic objectives and basic teaching contents which are common to all pupils ("common core").

1. The 1971 Education Committee proposes in its report (COMMITTEE REPORT 1973:52 p. 50-51) that the comprehensive school, which is equally long for everybody, should lead to the same minimum satisfactory level of achievement, as far as concerns the core contents essential from the point of view of the qualification for further studies. According to the committee's view a minimum satisfactory level of achievement common to everybody should be set for these core contents, and teaching should be arranged so that as many pupils as possible attain this common aim.

2. The Curriculum Committee proposes in its first report (COMMITTEE REPORT 1975:33) that the contents of general education should form an integrated whole, the core part of which is common to everybody and provides everybody equal qualifications for further studies. The guaranteeing of equal qualifications for further studies to everybody after the comprehensive school requires in the committee's opinion definition of the common minimum satisfactory level of achievement. Teaching contents should however, not be restricted only to the common core contents, but pupils should also be offered different kinds of contents to choose from. These elective teaching contents must, however, not be linked with the qualification for further studies. Instead, their task is to offer the pupils possibilities to develop their own talents and interests.

3. The Committee on the Differentiation of Teaching in the Comprehensive School states in the chapter on educational policy aims that measures should be taken in the comprehensive school to increase educational equality and to promote equal educational treatment and outcomes. According to the committee this means setting basic objectives common to all pupils in some goal and content areas that are central from the point of view of qualifications for further studies, and developing and introducing such measures that secure the attainment of these basic objectives. According to the committee's view the central goal and content areas include mother tongue, mathematics and foreign languages in particular, but also many other comprehensive school subjects. In the committee's opinion the school should naturally encourage pupils to also try and surpass the basic objectives.

3. Research and Development Work on Basic Objectives

3.1. Development of proposals for basic objectives and core contents

The National Board of General Education set up towards the end of 1974 three working parties whose terms of reference stated that they were to draw up proposals for the criteria of selecting common core contents to be taught to all pupils. On the basis of such eriteria the working parties were to define the actual common core contents. At the first stage the work focussed on the mother tongue, modern languages and mathematics.

The reason for setting up the working groups was the decicion of principle by the Cabinet (May 30, 1974) which, among other items, presupposes that teaching in the comprehensive schools should be developed as well as experiences gained from the implementation of the curriculum at schools. Practical experiences have shown that the comprehensive school syllabuses, as defined in the report of the Committee for the Comprehensive School Curriculum, are maximum syllabuses regarding teaching contents, in other words, they contain all subject-matter that

can be considered to be dealt with in good teaching conditions and among high achievers. In normal circumstances only part of the subject matter can be managed. The same applies to objectives, which have been defined as guidelines rather than as terminal behaviours.

While the need of defining common core contents and basic objectives had been noted in several contexts, the actual decision to take concrete steps in this matter was made when, due to some changes in projected activities, some money was available for setting up the working groups. Similar rapid action was taken by the Department of Evaluation of the Institute for Educational Research that, after consultation with the National Board of General Education, submitted a new proposal for a research and development contract. When the proposal was approved, it meant that the researchers gave up their earlier plans to construct tests for the assessment of the realization of the comprehensive school curriculum and, instead, focused on the research and development work on basic objectives and core contents. From the point of view of educational innovation it would be interesting to analyze why such rapid and decisive action was possible and, in fact, taken at that point of time, considering that it involved change of already preliminarily approved plans and rapid production of new plans.

While the time for the work was relatively short in view of the number of both theoretical and practical problems in the construction of the proposals, the project is one of the few cases in which R & D work has been closely linked with syllabus construction in Finland. The work generally proceeded so that researchers produced reviews of relevant research literature which were discussed by the working parties. They also conducted some empirical studies on problems of which there was not research-based data available and which were of such scope that they could be undertaken within the relatively short timetable.

3.2. Basic objectives and teachers' in-service education

The proposals for basic objectives and common core contents were partly prepared with a view to helping teachers in their efforts to realize the comprehensive school curriculum. Resources needed for printing and distribution of the proposals came from the funds earmarked for teachers' in-service education. After the first draft was completed, the National Board of General Education instructed the working parties to adapt the proposals so that they could be used in teachers' in-service education as well as in the planning of teaching. One copy of the proposals was sent to each school within the comprehensive school system.

The National Board of General Education recommended that the problem of basic objectives and core contents should be made the topic of in-service education during the school year of 1976-77. Provincial part-time consultants attended seminars in the Heinola In-Service Education Centre and they in turn taught a 1-2 day course for local consultants. Although there are no official data available, it is highly probable that the question of basic objectives was dealt with in each municipality. Voluntary in-service education arranged by teachers' professional organizations have also to some extent dealt with the same topic.

3.3. Follow-up activities

When the National Board of General Education in June 1976 sent the proposals to schools, it announced that it would attempt to assess whether the proposals are relevant for curriculun development in general and whether they improve the usability of existing syllabuses. It has set up a working party consisting of a number of persons within the NBGE, whose regular work is directly or indirectly influenced by the project. The working group has discussed various problems related to the clarification of the position of the proposals in the present educational context. It has also carried out some surveys of the extent and ways in which the proposals have been dealt with in the pre-service and in-service education of teachers.

The Institute for Educational Research has made a contract with the NBGE to plan and carry out a nationwide survey of pupils' learning outcomes in relation to the proposed basic objectives. In 1977 the work of three researchers has focussed on the problems of criterion-referenced measurement and of the generalizability of results. The first survey will be carried out in the spring of 1979. It is hoped that a second survey could be conducted some five years later in order to ascertain whether or not a concretization of objectives halps to contribute to an improvement of learning outcomes.

In addition to the survey-type study referred to in the previous chapter there are a few more intensive projects carried out in the lower stage of the comprehensive school, which started as mastery learning experiments but have now been linked with the work on basic objectives so that they base their work on the prepared proposals. Similar experiments have started in the upper stage. Their main task is to find out to what extent basic objectives can be attained in groups which differ in terms of heterogeneity and class size. The latter projects are in their early stage.

4. Summary of Follow-up Data

Before the proposals were finalized, drafts were sent to experienced teachers, teachers educators, teachers' professional organizations and teams of texbook writers in order to get feedback for revision. On the whole, the response was positive. The general approach and specific proposals were generally considered acceptable and relevant. Some useful suggestions for changes and additions were made. This procedure, i.e. asking informed persons and bodies for comments before publishing the proposals, is not very common in Finnish committee work. It proved very useful on many counts: it made it possible to draw on wider expertise and it also increased possibilities of various parties concerned to participate in innovation planning.

In collaboration with the Institute for Educational Research, the National Board of General Education has made an opinion survey among the provincial part-time consultants in the spring of 1977. The results indicate that they had used about half of their consultation time on basic objectives. All consultants reported that teachers had been positively disposed towards the proposals. Half of the consultants reported that only some teachers had obtained a copy while the other half thought that almost all or at least most teachers had a copy. A clear majority of respondents thought that 60-85 % of pupils will be able to achieve basic objectives and master the core contents. They believed that it now was easier to make tests and most of them thought that the achievement of the basic objectives corresponded to the middle grade of the present grading system.

The National Board of General Education conducted a similar opinion survey among the staff of teacher education units. The rate of return varied from 22.4 % to 58.3 %. All respondents reported that they found the proposals for basic objectives necessary. The answers indicate that supervisors had discussed the proposals and used them in a number of ways in their daily work with student teachers. Most of the teacher educators were of the opinion that 60-85 % of pupils can achieve the basic objectives. The general impression is that the proposals for basic objectives have been experienced both by teacher educators and student teachers as acceptable in approach and as useful and helpful both in the planning and realization of the teaching and in the evaluation of learning.

PART II : A N A L Y S I S

Paavo Malinen

5. Need of Defining Basic Objectives

The term "basic objectives" is not very widely used in international pedagogical literature although the concept it refers to is by no means unknown. What factors have led to a wider use of this term and to related curricular development?

If we analyze the planning and implementation of the comprehensive school curriculum, we can observe two opposing trends:

(i) In former primary schools the curriculum was prepared in close connection with practical teaching and the same idea was applied first when the comprehensive school curriculum was being drafted (curriculum tradition). Didactic literature is based on the view that the teacher plans his teaching with the help of nationally/centrally prepared programmes and available textbooks.

(ii) Secondary schools have followed a national curriculum, which has been official norm for teachers. This reflects Lehrplan-thinking, which was transferred to the comprehensive school when in 1972 a Committee report (POPS 70) was adopted as a national curriculum.

The first trend is linked with decentralized decision-making, while the second trend is typically a characteristic of centralized decision-making. The relationship between these two trends has remained open. Thus a teacher may be told that he is free to plan and organize his teaching independently. On the other hand, the circulars issued by the National Board of General Education have been interpreted so that they set fairly strict limits for teaching. Typical of recent development has been increased centralization. Thus no essential change to current practice was implied when the curriculum was made uniform in the whole country in 1972.

Studies have revealed other conflicts and weaknesses in the implementation of the comprehensive school curriculum (MALINEN 1976 b, 25-26):

1) The objectives stated in the curriculum are maximum objectives and are not related to practical teaching. It follows that most teachers largely follow old practice and textbooks.

2) General plans of educational policy direct the work done by central educational authorities whereas in the field decisions have to be made within the context of economic constraints and interpretations of statutes and regulations. Decision-making and the arguments supporting it are different in the field and in central educational administration.

3) After the adoption of a national curriculum for the comprehensive school there has been enacted a law and statute on school democracy. According to them there is to be a lot of joint planning of teaching by teachers and pupils in individual schools. Due to centralization trends and lack of clarity in the present situation there has not been expected progress in the comprehensive schools in this respect.

The objectives and the model of implementation of the comprehensive school have been fairly unanimously accepted by teachers (MALINEN 1976a). This means that there is a good basis for the realization of the comprehensive school curriculum even in the future. The weaknesses, confusions and conflicts mentioned in the above can prabably be removed by means of developmental work. There is development work going on two fronts:

1) The administrative structure is being reorganized so that it corresponds better to current practice. The construction of curricula is hierarchical and the role of local planning is defined more clearly. Changes of this kind have been prepared in recent years but official changes can be expected only in the 1980's.

2) The contents of teaching are being defined more explicitly by explicating basic teaching contents and basic objectives within the framework of the present comprehensive school curriculum. This will bring about desirable uniformity nationally and it also supports the planning of individual teachers.

Since work in the former line has proceeded slowly, there has been pressure to advance on the latter front. The educational authorities have wanted to bring about proposals describing basic teaching contents to be used in the in-service training of teachers. They are feeling a need to intensify the guidance of teaching which is adapted to practical needs felt by teachers. On this point teachers are in agreement with educational authorities, and thus the purposes of defining basic objectives are, in principle, congruent and no conflict of purpose exists.

In practice, however, there seem to exist conflicting views about the development work on basic objectives and basic teaching contents. The developmental phase has been so short that there is a lot of questioning and doubts are expressed, mainly due to lack of sufficient information. The actual needs for the definition of basic objectives vary to some extent:

1) Educational policy-makers expect a contribution to realizing educational equality and talk about a common set of objectives.

2) Educational administrators consider that it is easier to guide teaching once concrete basic objectives have been stated. This is hoped to give a better guarantee of desired learning outcomes and to make consultation and guidance easier.

3) Teachers expect clear instructions as to what are the most essential points to teach, since there is not enough time to deal adequately with all the subject matter incorporated in the curriculum and in textbooks.

The most explicitly articulated criticism of the definition of basic objectives has come from some textbook writers who have claimed that it will now be possible to officially approve for use in public education only one textbook as congruent with the curriculum. Doubts have been expressed also by some researchers, who have felt that the wish on the part of educational authorities and teachers to define only cognitive basic objectives for some school subjects has distoted educational objectives. Teachers may henceforth only concentrate on those pages that are considered or indicated to contain basic teaching contents.

The present writer (Malinen) is of the opinion that demand for the definition of basic objectives has arisen too rapidly on account of practical problems since the implementation of the new curriculum did not appear clear. Thus an attempt has been made to find a quick practical solution of the problem without examining the theoretical implications of the undertaking. The pressure of practical needs is leading to a situation in which basic objectives are defined only within the context of the administrative development of the curriculum. Didactically a very simple solution is found sufficient: basic teaching contents are indicated in the textbooks but no or little effort is made to develop teaching in other ways.

6. The Position of Basic Objectives in the Curriculum

On the basis of the above analysis it would appear that the introduction of basic objectives has been based on practical needs and considerations and fairly superficial planning. What, then, is the role of basic objectives in the curriculum in the light of theoretical planning? How well does practical development work correspond to such a theoretical plan?

We will deal with these questions on the basis of a study of curriculum construction carried out by the present author (MALINEN 1976b). We will limit the discussion of the role of basic objectives so that only the problems of the hierarcy and the legitimization of the curriculum are taken up.

The function of the curriculum in the planning and implementation of education is tied up with the structure of society. It is not, therefore, possible to outline a general theory of curriculum construction on these points. According to the existing Finnish system planning is directed by administrative rules and regulations by defining the forms of activity. Only in recent years has there appeared som definition of objectives. The curricular objectives have up to now been divorced from administrative regulations, which means that the linking of some basic objectives with an administratively directed process is relatively new.

In practice it appears reasonable to attach to curricular instructions issued by central educational authorities such basic objectives whose interpretation and implementation can be controlled. Thus it is not surprising that attention has so far been directed to the basic knowledge and skills in mathematics, mother tongue and modern languages. From the point of view of the hierarchical construction of curricula and the practicality of legitimatization this seems reasonable. At the same time it is, however, necessary to show how the teaching of basic contents is related to

- the study of total structure of the subject matter, and
- the manysided development of pupils' personality, for instance the development of thinking

Here we run into difficulties. Those connections are at the moment outside administrative legitimatization - the development of thinking is considered a purely didactic question. Social environment does not, either, support personality development so that teachers' activities would obtain sufficient sanctioning. On the contrary, in line with the non-political orientation of the school it is not possible to transmit to pupil only a body of subject matter without presenting wider relations and links.

In Finland common moral and ethical objectives have been discussed both by educationists (Vantala seminar in spring 1976) and by political decision-makers and civic organizations (Finlandia House seminar in autumn 1976). Common objectives have been found for a "good man" by applying the principle of consensus. No integrated view of personality has been constructed from these objectives nor has any implementation programme been outlined. There have been no efforts, so far anyway, to make them legitimatized basic educational objectives. It appears that, in practice, there are a number of educational objectives, which can command a wide social approval, and thus a given legitimacy without explicit administrative provision. The general educational objectives and teaching objectives go their several ways and the present developmental work on basic teaching objectives only serves to confirm this state of affairs.

The present situation does not, we can conclude, on all points correspond with the theoretical plan concerning the role of basic objectives in the teaching system. Hierarchical planning appears to function but there are weaknesses with legitimatization. This is probably mainly due to the fact that on the whole no attention has been given in Finland to legitimatization concerning objectives. Even now the statement of form and structure of the administrative process is considered the only official source of influence. There is little or no analysis done concerning the legitimacy of practical implications and of the effects of social environment in the implementation of curricula (cf. KÜNZLI 1975) Links with social approval are to some extent present through political channels.

When basic objectives are confirmed by central educational authorities subsequent to a thorough examination of their functions and uses, it is possible to give teachers support in their practical teaching. This will scarcely be felt as an encroachment of teachers' rights and a limitation of their use of personal judgment, if it is simultaneously pointed out what are teachers' own responsiblitics and planning tasks. It is teachers' responsibility, among other things, to interpret the possibilities of attaining basic objectives in the case of each individual

pupil; to decide how much further practice is needed; what possibilities there are for taking up optional contents, etc. Teachers must not only know what the basic objectives are but also how they may be applied in the case of each individual pupil. All pupils do not attain the basic objectives in the same manner, hence it is not reasonable to talk about minimum set of objectives. It is also difficult to distinguish between basic objectives and additional objectives, because in most cases additional teaching contents mainly deepen the understanding of the basics. Teachers obviously have a demanding task here and it is important that they from the very beginning realize this. It has not yet been possible to achieve this objective in practical implementation.

The definition of basic objectives is important in terms of educational policy, since they make it possible to concretize the attainment of educational equity in practical teaching. If the realization of objectives is interpreted - as was done in the above - as taking as the starting point the pupil's personality, due account is at the same time given to each pupil's individual development. It is, therefore, possible to harmonize the demands of educational equality and the goals of individual development. It is not advisable to draw up a detailed national standard of minimum satisfactory level of achievement for learning outcomes; a minimum programme can, however, be outlined for teaching. It is naturally possible to define basic objectives in terms of statements of pupil behaviour, but the interpretation of their attainment is up to teachers. Administrative legitimation can only concern teachers' activities, but it cannot state what the pupil must know at the end of each school year.

What new has been brought to the curriculum, when it has been started to define basic objectives within it? In fact, nothing that would not have been taken into account in a careful construction of curricula in general. The terms "basic teaching contents" and "basic objectives" would be unnecessary in the present administrative system if the realization of the curriculum and the essential contents of teaching had been considered equally obvious by

teachers and administrators. The situation is not, however, such in Finland during the large-scale transformation of the school system. It is possible that the above-mentioned terms will remain merely didactic terms, like "basic capabilities" and "fundamentals of instruction" (GAGNÉ 1965, 202-203) or "minimal skills" (BLOOM 1971, 30-31). In Sweden these terms have also been applied to the language of didactics, for instance, when KILBORN and LUNDGREN (1974, 67) discuss "basic skills" (basfärdigheter). The situation is similar in Denmark (basis kunskaper). The Swedish MUT-project did not succeed fully, perhaps partly due to the fact that legitimatization was not examined in the planning stage. Instead, MUT was considered a didactic project.

The position of basic objectives is different if the social system has a "total" educational system. In that case basic objectives have a central task in the development of pupils' personalities, as is shown by, for instance, Neuner's terms "Grundelegende Fertigkeiten und Grundwissen" (NEUNER 1973). The overall aim of education is defined on the basis of Marxist educational philosophy and all objectives connected with it are as such basic objectives. The situation in socialist countries seems to be such that in theoretical analyses basic objectives are clarified (as is done by NEUNER) but in practical didactics the term is not needed. Hierarchical planning functions anyway and the curriculum is legitimatized as a whole centrally.

7. Difficulties met in the development project

In theoretical considerations the use of basic objectives has been given a meaning which differs from what has been attained in practice. What kind of obstacles their introduction has met? How can these difficulties be overcome?

The need for introducing basic objectives into practical teaching has arisen quickly and they were incorporated into teachers' in-service training after two years' developmental work. One of

the main reasons for the difficulty of their implementation has been the scarcity of planning. When in-service training concerning basic objectives was started, the language, approach and aspirations of different people varied. On the other hand the goal of training was modest: teachers were offered proposals concerning basic teaching contents for perusal so that they might be able to make concrete decisions about changes in their teaching if they found the proposals useful. This is not an example of the dissemination of a deductic innovation process but rather a preliminary stage gor a subsequent, perhaps more "official", definition of basic objectives. The experiences were positive from the point of view of this objective. Useful information and experience was gained during the development work, which makes it possible to improve the definition of basic objectives. We will not take up this point, however, but try to assess what obstacles have been found in the field in accommodating the idea of basic objectives as such.

1) A major difficulty in the definition of basic objectives has been the lack of research data, particularly the lack of a clear theoretical frame of reference. Several administrative changes have been made which affect the comprehensive school curriculum. Research has not been able to support planning because the need for changes has outpaced research (MALINEN 1977, 212-213). This can be seen now when basic objectives are being introduced. Rapid changes seem to make it impossible to make full use of research-based information in Sweden as well (LUNDGREN & KALLÖS 1977).

2) The need of reorganizing the administrative structure of the comprehensive school was noted earlier in Chapter 5. Within the existing administrative rules and regulations it is difficult to bring about such hierarchical planning that corresponds with the theoretical position of basic objectives in the curriculum. Changing educational acts and statutes is a long political process during which the

use of the curriculum in the educational system can be clarified.

3) The transition to the new curriculum has administratively been carried out in a short time, but reforms in the objectives and contents of teaching take place more slowly. In-service training for teachers has been rather limited in scope as a whole, not only with regard to the question of basic objectives. In voluntary summer courses many teachers have learned more about them. Student teachers have also become acquainted with the proposals since they form part of their required reading and are also applied in practice teaching. Although attitudes towards specification of basic objectives are positive, the present in-service training does not reach in a suitable manner many teachers or they are not willing to use energy on this kind of training. Training must be given in such a form that it has clear contacts with teachers' everyday work. Then most teachers are motivated to plan their own work on the basis of the basic objectives.

4) Practical needs and a theoretically sound training do not coincide. Teachers expect concrete help in teaching at little cost. Administrators want quickly more specific curricular instructions so that rules and regulations are felt to be clear. There are constant difficulties in obtaining a sufficiently clear picture of the use of basic objectives in the field, when the needs are much more modest. The situation can be improved also in this respect by making the in-service training sufficiently thorough and concrete. Then it will be possible to show how many-sided activities are involved.

5) An adequate application of basic objectives presupposes that the teacher can interpret the attainment of objectives taking into account the different prerequisites of individual pupils. This is a demanding task and so far it has not been distinctly aimed at in training. On this point, training needs to be planned later.

8. SUMMARY OF PRESENT SITUATION

The preceding analysis (Chapters 5-7) has been written by Associate professor Paavo Malinen. It is based on personal observations concerning the introduction of basic objectives and the subsequent in-service training of teachers. At the same time he has studied the realization of the comprehensive school curriculum and its structure and brought to this analysis some theoretical considerations. The exposition of the position of basic objectives in the curriculum is based on that. It is, however, the analysis and summary of only one researcher. Therefore we will present the views of persons who have been involved in constructing the comprehensive school curriculum and in its further development.

The position of social-emotional objectives in the development of the comprehensive school curriculum

Kaisa Hälinen, Institute of Education, University of Helsinki, former secretary of the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee

When the Comprehensive School Curriculum Committee ten years ago started discussing what were the primary development needs concerning the primary and lower secondary school curricula, they came to the conclusion that school activities should be developed so as to be broader in scope as well as broader and more flexible with regard to their "emotional atmosphere". When the committee determined that the overall aim of the comprehensive school curriculum should be to promote the development of all aspects of each pupil's individual personality, they fully agreed that teaching should attempt to develop as far as possible the different potentials of all pupils. At that stage the views according to which educational equality is interpreted as the equality of educational outcomes was not even taken up. Disagreement in the work of the committee was, however, caused by the struggle for the number of hours among members representing different school subjects. At that point they were higly motivated to argue for the importance of their subject, pointing out the number of ways in which the particular subject can serve socio-emotional objectives. In addition, there was a pressure in

subject-wise syllabuses towards including too much of the subject matter in view of the available number of weekly lessons. It followed that when the curriculum was applied to practical teaching, teachers were concerned because of requirements which seemed to them overwhelming.

The integration of socio-emotional objectives with the cognitive basic objectives common to all pupils is problematic, when besides attempting to provide to all pupils the mastery of common set of knowledge and skills we wish to respect and foster the diversity of pupils' personality traits. Although it might be possible to draw up a set of norms for some areas - for instance good manners and co-operation - whose fulfilment can be assessed mainly through observation, most of the socio-emotional objectives are such that their attainment cannot, to any large extent, be regulated through administrative measures nor can they be exactly measured.

It is an important question how many-sided the construction of cognitive basic objectives is and how strictly their achievement is controlled. When cognitive basic objectives are presented it is important to state at least briefly how the simultaneuous emotional and social learning could be guaranteed by using different teaching methods. Teacher education, which is also undergoing a restructuring, bears a great responsibility for the fact that due account is always taken of the socio-emotional objectives.

The meaning and status of the proposals for basic objectives

Yrjö Yrjönsuuri, Deputy Director General, National Board of General Education, in charge of pedagogical R & D work

All decisions concerning the proposals for basic objectives have stressed the fact that the proposals prepared by the appointed working parties are really proposals, and there is no obligation for teachers to be guided by them. From the point of view of curriculum development, the definition of basic objectives in the so-called instrumental subjects has three primary purposes:

(1) Definition of basic objectives seeks to concretize and specify the comprehensive school curriculum so as to make its implementation more definite and more relevant.

(2) Definition of basic objectives seeks to specify the level of attainment in the comprehensive school so as to facilitate the articulation of comprehensive and post-comprehensive education in accordance with the decision of principle taken by the Cabinet on May 30, 1974.

(3) Definition of basic objectives seeks to find a way of developing the system of curriculum planning and development so that national-level plans can in a relevant way be related to planning at the provincial, local and school levels. This question must be fully examined and discussed before the whole-scale revision of the comprehensive school curriculum is possible.

The National Board of General Education has set up an internal working group to get feedback about the proposals and to make proposals for their development and possible "legitimatization". It has carried out two surveys referred to in Chapter 4. More detailed information will be obtained through the experiments mentioned in 3.3.

Problems met in the development of the proposals for basic objectives

Sauli Takala, Researcher, Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, secretary of the working party for modern languages

The main problem in the work on basic objectives was that the terms of reference given to the working party were very general and did not give a definite framework for action. The working party was obliged to make its own interpretation of the terms of reference and concretize them into a few guiding principles. This was a difficult task, especially as there did not exist any definite principles to steer the work by. The working party on modern languages followed more or less explicitly the following principles:

(1) Principle of the clarity of purpose: this meant, first and foremost, that the work to be undertaken was an integral part of the development of the comprehensive school in accordance with the Cabinet decision, which meant that better possibilities for post-comprehensive studies were to be guaranteed to all pupils whilst making sure that the requirement of many-sided personality development is taken into account.

(2) Principle of effective utilization of research-based information: this meant that the working party had to adopt or create a general model relevant to the development of a subject-oriented curriculum. The idea was to base all decisions, as far as possible, on research findings.

(3) Principle of hierarchical goal definition: this meant that objectives and contents are defined at all levels from the national to school level. Basic objectives and core contents are defined nationally, whereas intermediate objectives and further objectives are determined locally by teachers in co-operation with colleagues and pupils.

(4) Principle of realism: this meant that objectives and contents were to be defined so that they could be taught without constant pressure of time and also learned by pupils unless they have serious learning difficulties. It was recognized that there would be individual percormance both surpassing and falling short of the defined objectives.

(5) Principle of humanizing language learning: this meant that language teaching was to take better account of pupils' personality and thus give more attention to the educational contribution of language teaching to overall educational objectives by proper selection of topics and working methods. It also meant that the strictly utilitarian value of language study should be less emphasized.

If the working party had only taken account of the fourth principle, the criticism or worry expressed by some researchers and teachers concerning the neglect of the affective objectives would be justified. However, great efforts were taken to strike a balance between cognitive and affective objectives, with the possible exception of the working party on mathematics, which was more directly concerned with the cognitive subjectmatter objectives. It was thought that a more reasonable definition of cognitive objectives would make it possible for teachers to pay more attention to the affective objectives of the comprehensive school. Also attempts were made to establish links between cognitive subject-wise objectives and general affective objectives and thus to take a step forward in comparison to the present comprehensive school curriculum.

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